

path. We have seen enough of these surges in the past to know what to expect.

If you are opposed to human trafficking, human suffering, drug smuggling, pushing migrants into the shadows, then you should be absolutely alarmed by what is happening along the border today.

The hurricane is on the way. I hope the administration and Congress will take a serious interest in acting before it makes landfall.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

NOMINATION OF DEBRA ANNE HAALAND

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I am here to say a few words on behalf of DEB HAALAND to be Secretary of the Interior.

There is something wonderfully beautiful and symmetrical about her appointment to this position because of the Department of the Interior's role supervising America's public lands. Well, of course, before America's public lands were America's public lands, they were Native American lands, and DEB HAALAND will be the first Native American to serve in any President's Cabinet and the first to serve as the Secretary of this Department. So that is kind of a wonderful harmony with history, and I hope we appreciate that here.

The second thing that I want to say is that it is, to me, deeply ironic how much of the opposition to her as Secretary has come on the theory that she won't be fair to fossil fuels. We have lived through 4 years of a Trump administration with Secretaries of the Interior who were out-and-out operatives of fossil fuel. The fossil fuel hand in the Secretary's glove was obvious.

The idea that anything other than fossil fuel was treated fairly in the Trump administration is a preposterous notion. Basically, anything that wasn't nailed down, they gave to the fossil fuel industry with no consideration for any of the competitors, and they did it so badly and so shabbily and so sloppily because they were so greedy that a lot of the stuff they did got thrown out by courts because they didn't even bother to do their homework.

So, please, let's not talk about fairness after the last 4 years. Our friends on the other side lost their standing to talk about fairness after what they did for fossil fuel in the last 4 years, including outright lies about climate change.

My good friend from Texas talks about hurricanes. He has real hurricanes coming because of climate change. Yet where is the climate plan from the other side? None, because the fossil fuel industry won't let them.

Let me last say as I conclude, I come from the Ocean State. Representative HAALAND comes from one of those interior square States. Her Agency is called the Department of the Interior.

When you look at things like the Land and Water Conservation Fund, floods of money go to inside America, interior America, upland and inland America, and the coasts always get overlooked. I have made it very clear to Ms. HAALAND that has to stop. With climate change coming, with fisheries moving about, with sea levels rising, with oceans warming, with actual seas acidifying in front of our eyes, to overlook the coast can happen no more. I trusted her when she said she would. I will take her at her word, but I also intend to work very hard to make sure that I can support her in keeping her word that oceans and coasts will matter.

I yield to my friend from Minnesota. **THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. SMITH. Madam President, I rise today in strong support of the historic nomination of DEB HAALAND to serve as Secretary of the Interior. When Representative HAALAND appeared before the Senate for her confirmation hearing, she opened by saying: "My story is unique."

HAALAND is a 35th-generation New Mexican, an enrolled member of the Laguna Pueblo, and will be the first-ever Native American to serve as a Cabinet Secretary.

National Congress of the American Indians President Fawn Sharp noted that it is fitting that as we celebrate Women's History Month, DEB HAALAND is poised to make it. Her nomination is a historic choice and a moment of deep meaning to Tribal nations and indigenous people across the country who have seen over and over again the Federal Government fail to keep its promises to Native people, promises made in law and treaty.

It is clear to me that we need Representative HAALAND's strong voice of stewardship for our public resources, cultural resources, and public lands, for action on the climate crisis, and for making sure that the Federal Government lives up to its treaty and trust responsibilities for Tribal nations and their citizens.

Representative HAALAND's background and her life experiences make her perfect for this job. As HAALAND said during her confirmation hearings, "If an Indigenous woman from humble beginnings can be confirmed as Secretary of the Interior, our country holds promise for everyone."

The Interior Department includes the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which manages the Federal Government's relationship with American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities. Indigenous leaders across the country have expressed broad, bipartisan support for Representative HAALAND's nomination because they know that she will bring a personal commitment to lifting up Native voices and addressing deep inequities and longstanding funding challenges on Tribal lands.

The Department is also responsible for public lands, energy resources, and

wildlife conservation, and so it requires a leader who understands the cultural and economic value of these resources and the importance of conserving them. Representative HAALAND grew up with a deep affinity for public lands, for responsible land use, and for hunting and fishing. In fact, her family on her father's side is from Minnesota, where she tells me she learned a lot about the joys of walleye fishing.

In the House, Representative HAALAND served as the chair of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands, and she has earned the support of hundreds of groups working on climate change, conservation, and public lands management.

Representative HAALAND has been a champion for the tragic crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women.

Here we have a strong, capable, competent leader ready to serve our country as the first Native woman to lead the Interior Department. Colleagues, I can't help asking here during Women's History Month, why is it that almost 2 months after President Biden's inauguration, Representative HAALAND is one of the last three core Cabinet members to be confirmed in the Senate?

Why is it that she has faced such ferocious opposition from some Republicans?

Colleagues, over the last 3 months, Representative HAALAND has been called "extreme" and "radical."

One Republican Senator I serve with on the Indian Affairs Committee labeled HAALAND a "hardline ideologue with radical views"—this from a person who spent months promoting the false and widely debunked conspiracy theories about voter fraud in our election. Another Republican Senator called Representative HAALAND a "socialist, left-of-Lenin whack job"—though, later, he said he merely meant to call her an "extremist."

In the House, a Member of my own Minnesota congressional delegation orchestrated a hit campaign on Representative HAALAND by attacking her position on natural resources management and boundary waters. Strangely, this same Member happily supported Secretary Vilsack's confirmation even though he holds exactly the same positions.

As our former colleagues Tom Udall and Mark Udall said in an op-ed in USA Today, it is hard to imagine that either of them, had they been nominated to lead Interior, would have faced the same attacks for radical ideas.

I just find it difficult to take these Republican attacks at face value. My colleagues should know that Representative HAALAND was named the most bipartisan House freshman in the last Congress. If that is what a hardline ideologue looks like, maybe we should all aspire to be the role model that DEB HAALAND provides.

Colleagues, I think we need to be honest with ourselves about what is going on here. Once again, a woman—

and a woman of color—is being held to a different standard, and we need to name it. We have to come to grips with the reality that, time after time, strong women, especially women of color, are attacked when White men with the same views are welcome to walk right through that door, unopposed.

At their worst, these efforts—these attempts—to portray Representative HAALAND as extreme and unqualified show how much work we still have to do to reckon with our country's history of disparaging, disrespecting, and erasing Native people and how this tragic history has been reflected in the biases on exhibit during Representative HAALAND's confirmation. This is clear when we see how few Republicans could even acknowledge the historic nature of Representative HAALAND's nomination, choosing, instead, to focus on hostile questions about her tweets and whether she understands the law.

Now, sadly, these attacks that Representative HAALAND has been subjected to are not unique. We have seen this dance play out time and again with Biden-Harris nominees, especially with women of color. Excellent nominees, like Secretary Vilsack and Secretary Buttigieg, faced relatively tame confirmation processes. The vast majority of questions were about policy goals and their experience. No Senator referred to these nominees as “extremists” or “radicals.”

Yet how did the women of color fare?

In the Banking Committee, my Republican colleagues grilled Secretary FUDGE, our new Secretary of Housing and Urban Development—and a Black woman—about her intemperate comments on race. This was less than 3 weeks after our former President incited an insurrection of White supremacists, among others, and faced essentially no consequence from his own party. Neera Tanden was forced to withdraw her nomination to lead the Office of Management and Budget after some declared that her Twitter account was too divisive.

Well, if we had only known that mean tweets could disqualify you from public office, we could have saved ourselves 4 years of division and chaos and two impeachment trials after a torrent of inflammatory and hateful rhetoric from the former Twitter account of our former President, which most of my Republican colleagues said they tried to ignore or just hadn't read. Strong opinions from strong women of color are deemed unacceptable and cause for disqualification. I am just not buying it.

In my first floor speech in this Chamber, I said that, when you really listen to women, you begin to understand all the ways in which women are made less and are denied opportunities to contribute to their communities and to their country.

So I urge my colleagues: Don't let this be one of those times. Let's not silence these women and deny them op-

portunities to lead because we are uncomfortable with their power.

During Representative HAALAND's confirmation process, I started to get text messages from women friends, especially from Native women, who were horrified by the yelling and the condescending questions that were directed her way. We were proud of how she responded—with grace and with dignity—and we all knew how it felt.

I would bet that every woman in this Chamber knows what it feels like when this happens. A man talks down to you. He uses his power to explain something that you already know and signals in a hundred different ways that you don't belong in the room where it happens. Well, for a long time, women have found ways to respond to these affronts with grace as did Representative HAALAND, MARCIA FUDGE, Vanita Gupta, and Neera Tanden.

When I was a young woman, my mother was a very strong woman herself. She used to advise me to just ignore these folks and go about my business. Even today, as I worked on this floor speech, I wondered: Am I going to offend anybody? Am I going to sound too shrill? I bet there is not a man in this room who has ever worried about sounding too shrill.

So, colleagues, tonight, we will vote on Representative DEB HAALAND's confirmation to Secretary of the Interior, and we will all have a chance to restore dedicated, capable, passionate leadership to this important Department.

The choice to confirm Representative HAALAND is, indeed, historic, but it is not an abstract opportunity. As Secretary, Representative HAALAND will play a consequential role in combating climate change. She will also honor Tribal sovereignty and strengthen the government's relationship between the United States and Tribal nations. Maybe, just maybe, her leadership will help us see the strength of Native women and of all women and to not be threatened by that. Our country will be the better for it. I urge my colleagues to support the confirmation of DEB HAALAND for Secretary of the Interior.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

MAIDEN SPEECH

Mr. PADILLA. Madam President, on behalf of the people of California, it is my honor to address this body today. I stand before you, humbled and inspired by this moment in our Nation's history, as the Senator from the most populous and most diverse State in the Nation and as the first Latino Senator from the State of California. Let me begin by saying what a great country this is.

My name is ALEX PADILLA.

(English translation of statement made in Spanish is as follows:)

I am the son of Santos and Lupe Padilla.

I am also the proud husband of Angela Padilla and the proud dad of Roman, Alex, and Diego.

I love you guys.

Colleagues, my family's journey is central to my public service. My parents immigrated to California from Mexico in the 1960s in search of a better life. They arrived from different regions of Mexico, with little formal education but with a tremendous work ethic and big dreams. They met in Los Angeles. They fell in love. They decided to get married and apply for green cards—in that order.

I thank the U.S. Government every day for saying yes to those applications, because, if they had been denied, no doubt my life story would be a lot different.

For 40 years, my father worked as a short order cook—hard work, honest work—and as he will proudly tell you, his kitchen never failed an inspection. For the same 40 years, my mom worked tirelessly cleaning houses. It seemed like she never had a day off, but, together, they raised three of us—my sister, my brother, and me—in a modest, three-bedroom home in the proud, working-class community of Pacoima, CA, in the northeast San Fernando Valley.

Now, our neighborhood had more than its share of challenges—from poverty to crime to unhealthy air. It might not have been the safest neighborhood, but my mom felt blessed that we had the sanctuary of a backyard and a strong sense of community. It was there that my parents taught us about the values of service to others and of getting a good education.

Today, my sister, my brother, and I are all public servants. My sister has been a teacher, a principal, and, today, she works in administration for the Los Angeles Unified School District. My brother serves as chief of staff to Los Angeles City Council President Nury Martinez. If you pay close attention there, yes, I am the middle child. It may explain a lot.

Think about that. In one generation, our family has gone from being immigrant cooks and house cleaners to serving in the U.S. Senate. That is the California dream. That is the American dream. That is the dream I was raised to believe in and the dream that Angela and I are working hard to keep alive for our children and for future generations.

I think about my parents often, and I think about all of the hard-working people in our State and in our Nation who are hurting right now. I rise today on their behalf.

I rise on behalf of the cooks, the dishwashers, and the domestic workers who have seen their jobs and their lives upended by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I rise on behalf of the farmworkers and delivery drivers and nurses who have been on the frontlines of this pandemic and who have never stopped showing up.

I rise on behalf of the 4 million small businesses in California and the business owners, many who are hanging on by a thread and stretching like they